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ABSTRACT

After Botswana became independent of British rule in 1966, a series of five-year plans for economic development were written and put into action. Education was always seen by development planners as essential for development; by 1977, the government was promoting education for human resource development. Every child in the country was to be given a good basic education in a primary school provided by the government. In 1977 the government also established the Department of Nonformal Education within the Ministry of Education to provide basic education to illiterate adults. Botswana's Third National Development Plan (1973-78) involved literacy programs in the development strategy of the country. 1980 was to be an experimental year when programs would be designed and put into place, personnel would be trained, and materials would be produced and field tested. The goal was for the total eradication of illiteracy by 1985-86. However, leaders in the country did not make literacy education a priority, and little money was budgeted for the effort. Nevertheless, the educational structure is in place, with District Adult Education Officers and Literacy Assistants trained to implement the program. It is estimated that 65,000 persons have been served by the program, with 20,000 made literate. Much more work is left to be done to help the approximately 223,000 illiterates in the country. (KC)

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REPORT CARD ON A NATIONAL LITERACY PROGRAM:

THE CASE OF BOTSWANA

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REPORT CARD ON A NATIONAL LITERACY PROGRAM:

THE CASE OF BOTSWANA

By H.S. Bhola

Literacy is a political act, and politics of nations differ. Understandably, the uses of literacy differ as well as we go from one country to another.

Elsewhere (1), I have talked of two models of development: (a) the motivational-developmental model; and (b) the structural-developmental model. The motivational-developmental model seeks to motivate individuals to aspire for a better life, to prepare for new possibilities, to seek new opportunities and work hard to rise on the social and economic ladder. The responsibility for individual (and social) development lies with the individual. There is a definite assumption of fair-play in the society. Political, social and economic structures are considered to be equally amenable to the aspirations and actions of all citizens.

The structural-developmental model is preoccupied with political, social and economic structures which are seen to be in need of repair. The assumption is made that these structures may indeed have become instruments of oppression of the many by the few. Development is , therefore, seen as a process of structural reform.

These two models of development are, of course, not exclusive of each other. In the motivational-developmental model, there is the supposition that those who are motivated to aspire and to act for the achievement of new socio-political and economic goals will force existing structures to become

responsive. Similarly, those working with the structural-developmental model understand the need to motivate people to learn to avail of new structural changes, by leading and participating in new political, social and economic institutions. Motivations are not seen to be spontaneous.

To identify what developmental model is in use in a particular society, at a particular time in its history, one must analyze the predominant mode in the conceptualization of the developmental strategy and the values that inform the choice of means and ends.

The policies of literacy promotion in a country are indeed designed in the context of the development model in use. Mass literacy campaigns are, typically, launched in countries where the structural-developmental model is in use and where significant structural change is part of the developmental agenda. Literacy programs, large and small, and literacy projects of various kinds are, typically, implemented in societies following the motivational-developmental model (2).

In the figure on next page, the motivational-developmental model and the structural-developmental model have been presented as two ends of a continuum; and literacy projects, programs and campaigns undertaken by a selected group of countries have been placed along the same continuum (3). The National Literacy Program of the Republic of Botswana can be seen to fall somewhere in the middle of the continuum.

The Case of Botswana

Botswana, formerly British Betchuanaland, became

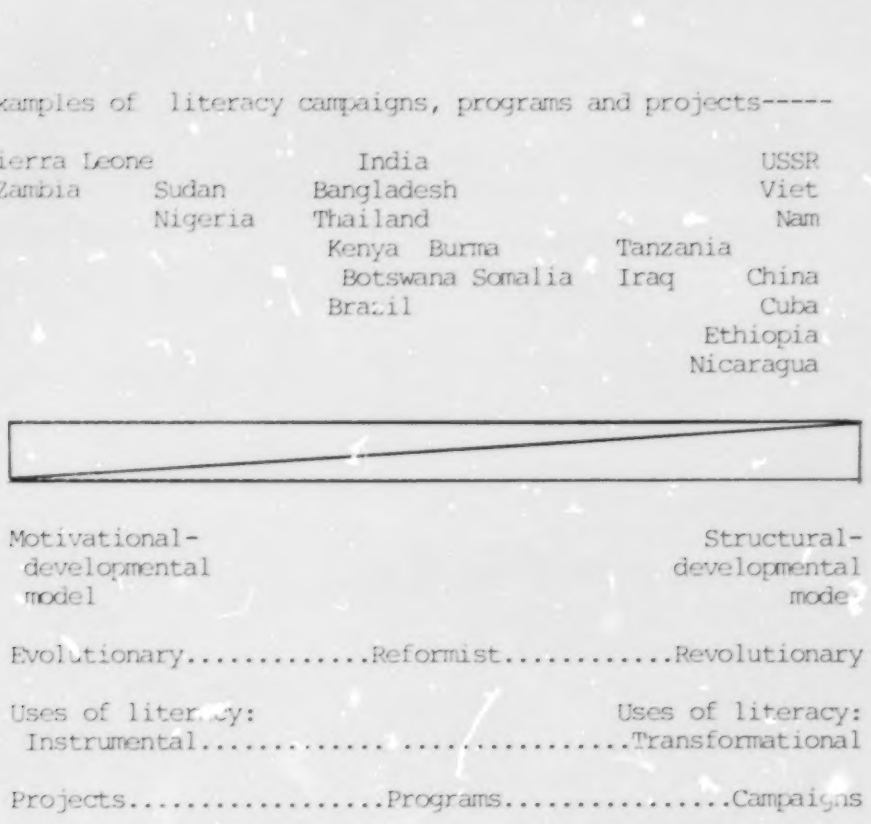

Figure showing relationships between development policy of a country and its policies of literacy promotion.

independent in 1966. The two most important realities faced by the nation at its birth were the poverty of its people and its vulnerability to South Africa next door.

The development ideology and strategy

The first national development plan of the newly independent Botswana was a transitional plan that sought to bridge the period of constitutional change from internal self-government to full independence; and from rudimentary planning of the colonial era to full resource planning. The planners sought to create a "rationally planned and guided economy without

stifling private initiative" (4). The importance of the mining sector in the development of Botswana was well understood. Rural development was seen as important both for reasons of social justice and to stop migration from rural areas to the urban areas. The most over-riding concern was manpower training to be able to take control of the bueaucracy and of the economy.

The Second National Development Plan, 1970-75 (5) was already talking of self-reliance and democratic planning. To make the involvement of the people possible, it had visualized the establishment of village development committees and of district development committees. It is worth noting, however, that there was no discussion of the role of nonformal education or adult literacy in the process of development in general, and in rural development in particular.

By the time the Fifth National Development Plan, 1979-85 was written and promulgated, the development ideology and strategy of the nation had been well articulated. The development strategy of Botswana today is governed by the four national principles of Democracy, Developoment, Self-reliance and Unity (6). These principles are claimed to be rooted in the traditional culture of the Botswana people; and, when applied in practice, will achieve Kagisano , that is, social harmony.

The four national principles stated above are concretized in four national planning objectives: Rapid economic growth, Social justice, Economic independence, and Sustained development. The two main foci of national development action are employment creation and rural development.

The bulk of development resources were to come from Botswana's mining sector. The government was "to achieve rapid and large returns from intensive capital investment in mining [and] to re-invest those returns so as to improve the living standards of those who do not benefit directly from mining sector expansion" (7).

The Botswana development strategy , unfortunately, did not work as it was supposed to. The diamond mines of Botswana did not generate all the resources needed for the achievement of development objectives. As President Dr. Q.K.J. Masire of Botswana put it in his introduction to the Fifth National Development Plan, Botswana has to depend on others, in this case South Africa, to bring out its wealth from the bowels of the earth; and prices for Botswana minerals, as also of other Third World Nations, are determined by forces outside their control. Dependency perpetuates dependency. Vulnerability feeds on itself.

Botswana is a large country, as big as France in size. However, two-thirds of it is covered by the Kalahari desert, one of the harshest environments for human habitation. The absolute size of the population is small. The 1981 national census enumerated 941,027 people. Eighty-three per cent of them lived in the rural areas, and the rest in the urban areas. There were slightly more females than males; and 43.3 per cent of the total population was below the age of 15.

Employment generation has definite limits in an economy which empolys no more than 15 per cent of the total labor force of some 428,000 -- and growing at the rate of 3 per cent

annually-- in the formal sector. Indeed, three-fifth of its labor force, numbering 250,000 men and women, are dependent for their livlihood mainly on low-productivity work in agriculture and in the informal economy. They are the poorest among the poor.

The problem of development in Botswana, thus, becomes the problem of rural development.

The role of education in development

Education was always seen , by development planners in Botswana, as the essential instrument of development. What is noteworthy is the fact that the National Commission on Education, in its report published in 1977, marked a shift in ideology from "manpower training" to "human resource development" (3).

Every child in Botswana was to be given a good basic education in a primary school provided by the government. Some of these children will go to secondary and vocational schools, and some, later on, to the university to acquire abilities and skills needed in Botswana. But, most importantly, primary education was seen as a minimum basic need by planners.

But what about those who had been bypassed by formal education; and were unlikely to avail of formal education now or in the immediate future? The educational needs of farmers, and workers, in rural and in urban areas, had to be met today. If they could not come to school, the school had to go to them. In 1978, the Government of Botswana established the Department of Nonformal Education within the Ministry of Education in Gaborone with the purpose of providing basic education to those lacking in formal education (9).

It is not within the scope of this paper to present a full accounting of Botswana's achievements in formal education, or even in the area of nonformal education. What is most interesting is how development planners in Botswana made the "literacy and development" connection. There are basically two parts to the justification of literacy for development in Botswana. A useful radio network to cover the wide expanses of Botswana, with its small and scattered habitations, was going to be impossible in the near future. For the same reason, face-to-face delivery of extension services was going to be an unattainable hope. Print communication was going to be central to the delivery of education and extension in Botswana (10).

Before presenting a profile of Botswana's national initiative in literacy, a comment needs to be made on the nature of the policy-making process itself. "Literacy for Development" plans of Botswana are an excellent example of technical rationality, duly codified in planning documents. But technical rationality is not the same thing as political reality; and codification in planning documents is not the same thing as implementation of planning actions. Political commitment to literacy may be less than total. The belief in the role of literacy in development is not permeated within the whole system of planning and action at its various levels (11).

Botswana National Literacy Program: A Profile

At Independence, in 1966, the new Department of Community Development opened some literacy classes for adults. There were,

however, no clear objectives, no sense of the method, and no suitable materials. Soon interest waned and the program withered away. Later, in 1970, the Botswana Christian Council initiated some literacy work in Selebi-Phikwe. The material they used did not have much relevance to the day-to-day problems and concerns of learners, however.

In 1972, the Division of Extra-Mural Services, now the Institute of Adult Education of the University of Botswana, influenced by Unesco's functional literacy concept, started fifteen learner groups in Francistown. It was a curious mix of Unesco's work-oriented literacy and Paulo Freire's pedagogy of the oppressed (12).

In 1973, Kenneth Brooks, a Unesco consultant came to Botswana, and recommended a functional literacy program which would attempt to eradicate illiteracy from Botswana within ten years. A significant feature of Brook's plan was the used of extension staff of each ministry as field officers who would supervise functional literacy groups. The Unesco project was declined by the Government for being too ambitious and too demanding of the extension agencies who had other priorities at the time.

In the meantime, the Government of Botswana experimented with radio and two radio campaigns were conducted in 1973. One campaign sought to educate the masses in regard to the National Development Plan and covered 1,500 groups of learners. A second radio campaign dealt with the Government's land reform proposals and covered 4,000 groups of learners all over the country (13). These campaigns were found to be reasonably successful in

overcoming the literacy barrier through the use of radio and literate group leaders. But it was clear that nonformal education without literacy will have problems of motivation and of unresponsive audiences.

It was Botswana's Third National Development Plan, 1973-78 (rolled over in 1976) that asked the Ministry of Education to investigate the role of literacy programs in the development strategy of the country; and, where possible, to sponsor functional literacy programs, on a local or national scale, using existing institutions and organizations as the base for action. The plan document went on to say that "there was a strong a priori argument for a large-scale national functional literacy project." The high illiteracy rate of some 70 per cent made it difficult to disseminate information and to receive feedback in a country of scattered villages and cattleposts and where the "word of mouth" played little part.

The findings of the National Commission of Education of 1977 and other evidence led to the formulation of a national policy on nonformal education. One aspect of this policy was the policy for adult literacy.

Two pilot projects in adult literacy preceded the Botswana National Literacy Program (BNLP) that was launched in 1981, after the experimental year of 1980. Both of these pilot projects were conducted by the Botswana Extension College, since merged in the Department of Nonformal Education: first during August-November, 1977 and second during July-December, 1978.

The overall time frame and targets. The year 1980 was to

be an experimental year when plans would be made, organizational arrangements designed and put in place, personnel would be trained and literacy materials would be produced and field tested. The total number of illiterates, estimated to be between 250,000 to 300,000, would be served for the total eradication of illiteracy by 1985/86.

Objectives of the literacy program. The objectives of the Botswana National Literacy Program were rooted in the assumption that "a literate population is a necessity for the successful implementation of the country's far reaching development programme, and that there will never be enough field staff available for person-to-person development assistance and advice....Thus, all government development activities in field work require reading abilities in their target group in order to give solid backing to all their advice by leaving booklets, information hand-outs, posters and brochures for rural inhabitants tht they can refer to when the extension worker is not present" (14).

The objectives are to create opportunities for meeting "the learning needs of communities in rural and remote areas, for adults who never had a chance to go to school or who have relapsed into illiteracy, and for children of school age who are living in villages without schools (15). The objective of serving the educational needs of children in remote areas who have no school to go should be of interest. The draft of the Sixth National Development Plan, 1985-90, also seeks to obtain the cooperation of other line ministries to make available relevant continuing basic education for the out-of-shool

population. This means that literacy is not seen as the sole preserve of the Department of Nonformal Education in the Ministry of Education, but is conceptualized as a collaborative effort among all the departments and ministries dealing with education and extension.

The level of political commitment. As already indicated, the essential role of literacy in development is well understood by development planners and is codified in the nation's development plans. In the practical politics of day to day, however, political commitment falters. The top leadership in the country has not made literacy a part of their political discourse. Indeed, they may be avoiding to be identified with a program whose effects are intangible, whose successes seldom spectacular and whose failures are always easy to point out.

The amount of funding for the program provided by the Government can be seen as one indicator of its political determination. During the 1981/82 budget cycle, the Government of Botswana may have spent no more than 5 to 6 per cent of the total budget of 811,735 Pula (One Pula is about one dollar). During 1983/84, the Government contribution was about 2[illegible] per cent out of a total outlay of 1,589,758 Pula. Thus, three-fourth of the budget for the literacy program came from outside sources such as the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA); the Agency for Technical Cooperation of the Federal Republic of Germany (GTZ); UNICEF; and others. Understandably, this dependence on forgein funds pawns the program to outsiders.

Institutionalization of the literacy initiative. The

institutionalization of the program within the governmental structure is, on the other hard, a very hopeful sign. There is a National Literacy Committee that acts as the policy making and planning organ at the inter-ministerial level. Botswana is one of the few Third World countries with a full-fledged department of nonformal education and a separate section for literacy coordination.

District Adult Education Officers (DAEO´s) have been appointed in each of the districts and major areas of the country to implement the literacy programs. Each DAEO has a number of Literacy Assistants (LA´s), one for each of the clusters into which districts have ben divided for the purpose. Each LA´s supervises a number of Literacy Group Leaders (LGL´s) who are volunteer literacy teachers but receive a very small honorarium.

With the general paucity of educational infrastructures in the country, and with little backup support available, most of the technical work related to the BNLP has to be done by the DNFE with or without outside consultants. Problems of curriculum development, production of materials, training of personnel at the various levels of the program, and evaluation and monitoring have all been handled by the DNFE with and through it's own institutional resources (16).

Social mobilization for the program. To ensure that the BNLP does not become a program dominated by the bureaucracy, there have been genuine efforts to promote mass participation. The existing structure of District Extension Teams (DET´s) and Village Extension Teams (VET´s) is used to involve people in making decisions about their learning needs and in their learning

groups. This is not to say that hopes for people's participation have been fully realized. DAEO's spend too much time at their desks in the district headquarters. LA's, most of them women, do not like to leave their offices to go into the bush. When they do go to the villages, their visits are short and in haste. There is no time to spend with community leaders or with learners to mobilize them for participation in the literacy program.

Curriculum for literacy learners. The BNLP follows the Unesco concept of functional literacy. This requires that the teaching of the 3 R's and of functional skills (in agriculture, cattle-raising, or another chosen activity) be taught in complete integration with each other. This is easier said than done. The LGL's, most of them, primary school leavers, are unable to teach economic skills to learners at a functional level. The hope that the program would be able to use the extension workers in the field to teach functional skills to adults in literacy classes have not been realized. Thus, the literacy primers have become the core of the curriculum. A monthly broadsheet sent to all literacy classes both extends and diversifies the curriculum. Follow up books and other supplementary reading materials have been produced to enrich the curriculum for literacy learners (17).

Training of literacy personnel. Training of literacy personnel for the BNLP is one of its relatively strong points. LGL's receive an initial training of 14 days, and then get monthly refresher courses. There are also annual workshops for selected LGL's. LA's begin with an initial training of three

weeks duration and then continue to receive in-service training of different duration and scope. The DAEO's on the BNLP may be one of the best trained cadre of literacy officers anywhere in Africa (18).

The teaching-learning process. Classes are supposed to be held during September-December of each year, that is, during the lax period of the agricultural cycle. It has been discovered, however, that classes last all year. Classes are conducted in all sorts of places: schools, community halls, Kgotlas, under the trees and, in some cases, in shelters constructed by learners.

Each group is supposed to have between 5-16 learners. If group membership falls below five, learners are distributed to other groups. If the number of learners in a group goes beyond 16, the group is divided into two parts. There are more women in classes than men. Young children are also often present.

Classes are supposed to meet five times a week for 75 minutes at each session. Groups should decide when to meet. It takes 12 months (Some 400 hours of instruction) for a learner to become fully literate.

No attempt is made to force everyone in the class to keep the same pace and be at the same lesson on a particular day. Ther are thus many learner groups within the same one literacy class. There is lot of peer teaching. There is not much teaching of functional skills, however. Field workers from other departments of extension are not available to teach and LGL's are not competent to teach such material.

Residential literacy classes may be tried in areas where people live too far apart from each other and where it would be

impossible to meet as a group. Recently, the Luthern Church of Botswana organized a residential litracy course for 12 people at the "Sehitwa School of Adult Education." Participants became literate, on the average, in a period of six weeks, with four hours of instruction each day. In addition to reading and writing, they were taught some gardening, cooking, construction of pit laterines, bee-keeping, personal hygiene, as well as some history, civics and geography.

Coverage of the program. As indicated earlier, estimates for illiterates in Botswana vary from 250,000 to 300,000. The following table presents the year by year coverage of the program:

Number of	1980	1981	1982	1983
Participants	7976	23630	18789	27935
Literacy Groups	699	1779	NA	2050
Literacy Group Leaders	NA	1427	1188	1559
Literacy Assistants	28	105	104	135

Notes: 1980 was the experimental year.
1984 figures are not available.
Number of learners expected to be enrolled are 33,000.

Figures in the table above are enrolment figures and not the figures for adults (or children) made literate. It was only in 1983 that it was decided to administer literacy tests to learners attending literacy classes. Hopefully, soon there will be some data to report on the number of people made literate through the program. Current estimates suggest that 65,000

learners may have been covered during the total life of the BNLP; and that as many as 20,000 may have left as fully literate.

report

Post literacy programs. The challenges of post-literacy programming in Botswana are no different from anywhere else in the world. Those who graduate from literacy classes must continue to read so that they do not lose the literacy skills so painfully acquired and that they put their literacy skills to use as they participate in the social, economic and political institutions of their societies. This requires production of a variety of reading materials for the new literate to read and assistance in liking the new literate with institutions of production and participation in the community.

It has been estimated that while there are about 250,000 illiterates in Botswana, there are an almost equal number of literates and semi-literates who need materials to read. Materials need to be produced for them that are both functional and interesting.

But there is a much greater challenge. The present "literacy groups" who are already at an advanced stage must be transformed into new "project groups" directed towards functional and productive activities. Some of these project groups may function with the guidance and support of DNFE, but most should be adopted by the various departments and agencies of development extension.

Evaluation of the Botswana National Literacy Program. The BNLP has paid due attention to the evaluation of its methods,

materials and results. An internally conducted mid-term evaluation of the BNLP had been anticipated in a meeting of the National Literacy Committee as early as 1981. Such an evaluation was conducted during 1983 (19). While some outside assistance was obtained, it was basically an internal evaluation handled by the officers at the DNFE headquarters in Gaborone and by the DAEO's in the districts. While several "technical" objections have been raised against this evaluation, the exercise was a great success when judged with pragmatic criteria. The evaluation exercise succeeded in establishing the rudiments of a Management Information System within the BNLP. It provided some useful data that was used in making several important program decisions. At another level, the evaluation exercise has made the functionaries of the BNLP conscious of the need for program information. Finally, it ended up being an exercise in mobilization of learners and communities. Participation in the program shot up from 18,000 to 28,800.

Concluding remarks

The tasks that the BNLP set for itself are by no means complete. The target date for the total eradication of illiteracy in Botswana is only fourteen months away; but no dramatic reductions in the number of illiterates can be claimed. After all the people have been taught to read and write, there will be new development agendas and new educational needs arising from them.

Development planner in the Government of Botswana need to make literacy central to the development process both in word and

in dead. They have to make sure that there is no loss of nerve in the face of temporary setbacks. They have to make sure that bureaucratic infighting and provoked crises do not harm the movement that has the chance of making people less poor and less vulnerable.

Notes and References

1. This conceptualization of two general approaches to development was first presented in H.S. Bhola, "Justifications for Literacy: A Speculative Essay," paper presented to the Twenty-fifth Annual Conference of the Comparative and International Educationa Society held at Tallahassee, Fla., March 18-21, 1981. It is now incorporated in Chapter 13 (pages 196-199) of H.S.Bhola, Campaigning for Literacy, Paris: Unesco, 1984.

2. For operational distinctions among literacy projects, literacy programs and literacy campaigns, see H.S. Bhola et. al., The Promise of Literacy, Baden-Baden, FRG: Nomos Verlagsgesellschaft, 1983 (page 206).

3. All examples used in the figure on page 4 have come form Campaigning for Literacy, and The Promise of Literacy.

4. From Dr. G.K.T. Chiepe,"Botswana´s Development Strategy since Independence," paper presented to the Symposium on Education for Development, organized by the Botswana Society and held at the University of Botswana, August, 1983.

5. The First National Development Plan of Botswana

pertained to the years 1968-73 while the Second National Development Plan covered the years 1970-75. The first and many of the subsequent development plans were rolled in every two years. The Fifth National Development Plan covered the years 1979-85 and lasted for full five years.

6. Ministry of Finance and Development Planning. National Development Plan 1979-85. (V NDP). Gaborone: Government Printer, 1980. Pages 61-62.

7. V NDP

8. Republic of Botswana. Education for Kagisano: Report of the National Commission on Education. Gaborone: Government Printer, 1977.

9. For definitions of formal education, alternative formal education , nonformal education and informal education, see H.S. Bhola, "Non-formal Education in Perspective," Prospects, Vol. XIII, No. 1, 1983, Pages 45-53.

10. A detailed justification for the role of literacy in development is offered in H.S. Bhola,"A Policy Analysis of Adult Literacy Promotion in the Third World: An Accounting of Promises Made and Promises Fulfilled," International Review of Education, XXX (1984), 249-264.

11. The kind of language about literacy promotion which is found in development policy statements of Tanzania are absent from political discourse in Botswana. The Report of the Presidential Commission on Economic Opportunities, issued in May 1982 talks a lot about formal basic education than of nonformal education and literacy in rural development.

12. Reference is to Paulo Freire, Pedagogy of the Oppressed. New York: Herder and Herder, 1970.

13. These radio campaigns followed the model made popular by Tanzania.

14. From unpublished documentation about the Sixth National Development Plan.

15. VI NDP

16. This evaluation has been described and discussed in H.S. Bhola,"Building a Built-in Evaluation System: A Case in Point," paper presented to The 1984 Joint Meeting of Evaluation Research Society and Evaluation Network held in San Francisco, Ca.,October 11-13, 1984.

17. A Writers´ Workshop for writing follow-up reading materials for new readers was held at Molepolole, Botswana during August 1984, under the auspices of the German Foundation for International Development. A large number of booklets were produced and later edited for publication and distribution.

18. A series of five evaluation workshops were organized for DAEO's working in the BNLP during 1982-83. The evaluation workshops also taught the DAEO´s important planning skills. Later in August 1984, many DAEO´s also attended the Writers´ Workshop.

19. Reference is made to the evaluation paper in 16 above.